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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000649

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR S/CT, PM, INL/LP, G/TIP, DRL/PHD, AND WHA/CEN

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SMIG](#) [PHUM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: COUNTERTERRORISM ACTION GROUP -- TEGUCIGALPA
MEETING; U.S. ONLY COUNTRY PROVIDING CT ASSISTANCE

REF: STATE 14279

Classified By: Political Counselor Francisco Palmieri;
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (SBU) Summary: At our first Counterterrorism Action Group (CTAG) meeting to discuss counterterrorism (CT) assistance to the Government of Honduras (GOH) and assess GOH CT needs, representatives of G-8 missions, Spain, and the European Union (EU) all concurred that the threat of a terrorist attack in Honduras remains low. At this time, no other government or international organization, apart from the U.S., has active CT programs in Honduras. The participants had the opportunity to review U.S. CT assistance programs in Honduras, and some support was expressed for a Central American regional CT program if one were to be developed. Embassy plans to invite representatives from the GOH to participate in the next CTAG meeting. End Summary

2. (U) Embassy Tegucigalpa hosted its CTAG meeting March 9, to share information on current U.S. CT programs and assistance to Honduras with other interested governments and to review and assess GOH CT needs. In attendance were representatives from the following embassies: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Japan. A representative of the European Union also participated. PolOff met separately with a representative from Canada who could not attend the March 9 meeting.

3. (C) All participants concurred that the threat of a terrorist incident in Honduras remains low. There was agreement, however, that the GOH lacks the ability to effectively control its borders and that this remains problematic. Participants agreed that alien smuggling and trafficking in persons, organized crime syndicates, and narcotrafficking remain the largest external threats facing Honduras, particularly as some of these organizations could possibly be affiliated with terrorist organizations in Colombia. Control of Honduras identity documents is weak and fraudulent passports are easily obtained via corrupt public officials. The fact that Honduras has yet to name a CT Coordinator, as obligated by the UN, was also highlighted. (Note: Honduras convened an emergency National Security meeting attended by Minister of Defense Federico Breve, Minister of Public Security Oscar Alvarez, and Minister of Interior and Justice Jorge Ramon Hernandez Alecerro to discuss the March 11 terrorist attack in Madrid, Spain and to review Honduras' security postures. The GOH is concerned that it might possibly be targeted for future terrorist attacks due to its support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. End Note)

4. (SBU) Participants noted that Honduras is the only country in the region, apart from Panama, to have signed and ratified all UN and OAS counterterrorism treaties, conventions, and protocols. (Note: Decrees making official congressional approval of three of the conventions are awaiting presidential signature and publication. End Note.) Honduras also does appear to do a better job than its neighbors at apprehending illegal aliens and their smugglers, although the GOH needs more assistance in investigative techniques and with how to orchestrate undercover operations. The Honduran Frontier Police remain the most capable law enforcement entity in the country and they would likely be called upon to respond to any internal terrorist threat, although the organization is not particularly geared toward CT activities. The Honduran Armed Forces (HOAF) are also in the process of reconfiguring their Special Forces Battalion (stationed in La Venta) into a more effective CT unit. No CTAG participant has, however, conducted an independent assessment of GOH CT needs and capabilities.

5. (SBU) Political Counselor reviewed with the participants recent U.S. CT and law enforcement assistance/training to the GOH to include: port security; INL programs; money laundering training; assistance with machine readable passports; some special forces training; the construction of a shoothouse in La Venta; and training to Honduran immigration, customs, law enforcement, and border guards to better identify fraudulent documents, impostors, suspicious persons, and in recognizing bonafide U.S. documents, all to help combat alien smuggling

and trafficking in persons and contraband.

Canada

¶6. (U) Canada does not currently have any CT programs planned or in place for Honduras. Their Embassy is, however, interested in participating in a regional CT program if one were to be developed.

Japan

¶7. (U) Counselor Naganuma of Japan reported that, in the past, the GOJ has sent some Honduran law enforcement agents to Japan for training, although no programs are currently ongoing. He also noted the possibility of illegal Chinese immigrants transiting Honduras on their way to the U.S., using stolen Japanese passports.

France

¶8. (U) France does provide some limited police training/assistance to the GOH although this does not focus on CT efforts. France currently has no plans to fund CT projects or training in Honduras.

Germany

¶9. (U) Germany does not have any ongoing programs in Honduras that would contribute to the GOH's ability to conduct CT operations.

Italy

¶10. (U) Italy does not have any ongoing CT programs in Honduras.

Spain

¶11. (U) Spain has been providing some limited training to the GOH through assistance to the Public Ministry to improve rule of law, the intelligence services, and to modernize the security forces, but there has been no real focus on CT efforts.

European Union

¶12. (U) The EU has not particularly focused on law enforcement or CT threats in Central America and no programs are currently being planned.

In Honduras, G-8 Not Focused on CT Issues

¶13. (SBU) Comment: Other diplomatic missions in Honduras remain primarily focused on traditional consular services, rule of law, and development issues. There is a growing consensus, however, that transnational threats such as alien smuggling/trafficking in persons and organized crime syndicates need to be better addressed. There is some interest in a regional CT program if one were to be developed. Embassy will continue to work with CTAG members to support efforts to enhance Honduran law enforcement, military, and judicial institutions to address these concerns. Embassy will invite a representative from the GOH to the next CTAG meeting. End Comment.
PALMER